GUIDE TO THE MD1 SYRIA FILE

[This file is concerned with the modern Arab state of Syria and its inhabitants. Syria is located approximately between 32° 25' and 37° 25' W. latitude and 35° 50' and 42° 25' E. longitude. To the north and northeast it is bounded by Turkey, on the east and southeast by Iraq, on the south by Jordan and on the west by Israel, Lebanon and the Mediterranean Sea. It is approximately 72,000 square miles in area, with an estimated population in 1972 of 6,680,000. The majority of the population are Sunni Moslems but there are also many Christians. Arabic is the official language of the country. Syria is primarily an agricultural and stock-raising nation, but within recent years industrialization is increasing at a steady rate, especially in flour milling, oil refining, textile, cement, tobacco, glassware, sugar, and brassware manufacture. In 1965 nearly all industries were nationalized under the Socialist government. Historically, Syria is one of the world's oldest inhabited lands. The state (later republic) of Syria was formed from the break-up of the former Turkish Empire districts (sanjaks). Under the provisions of the Treaty of Sevres (Aug. 10, 1920), Syria was made a separate entity and divided into the states of Syria and Greater Lebanon, effective as of Sept. 1, 1920, both being administered under a French mandate (1920-1941), which terminated on September 16, 1941 when Syria was proclaimed a republic by the French administration. The powers of this newly created republic were not fully effective, however, until January 1, 1944. In February 1958 Syria joined with Egypt to form the United Arab Republic but seceded in 1961. Ten years later Syria again joined Egypt along with Libya to form a new Federation of Arab Republics. The uneasy diplomatic and military situation in the Mideast, primarily between Arab countries and Israel, has led Syria to reshuffle its diplomatic relations considerably, first by severing

relations with the United States in 1967, later with Jordan in 1971 because of fighting between Jordanian forces and the Palestinian guerrillas (whom Syria supported), and to further strengthen her ties with the Soviet Union.

The file consists of eleven English-language sources, numbered as sources 2, 4-7, 9, 11, and 14-17. Each source deals in its own way with specific facets of Syrian culture and there is no source giving an overall picture of Syria as a whole, although sources 14: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development Report and 17: Syria, Directorate of Statistics do give some generalized ethnographic data. Religion is covered to some extent in 2: Belgrave, which is an account by a squadron leader in the British armed forces of his visit to the Alawites, and in 9: Hitti, written by a former professor of Semitic literature at Princeton University, on the Druze people and religion. One aspect of physical anthropology covered briefly in this file is that found in 4: Cummins and Shanklin dealing with the dermatoglyphics and palmar configurations of the Mitwali. Both authors are physical anthropologists. 6: Government of Syria is a comprehensive report on Jezirah province dealing with the ethnic and religious composition of the population, agriculture, land tenure, credit, communications, and transport. 7: Lewis is a brief study of the inter-related problems of canal irrigation systems and their maintenance in central Syria, and the concomitant health hazard they present when the systems break down. Lewis, at the time of his study, was instructor at the Middle East Center for Arab Studies. Information on the Syrian economy may be found in 5: Barakat, written by the Secretary of the Currency and Credit Council of Syria, and in the pages of the International Bank Mission's account presented in 14: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development Report. Problems of archaeological preservation of monuments and sites in Syria may be found in 16: Collart, which is the report of the UNESCO mission to Syria in

1953. 15: Khadduri, prepared by a well-known scholar of Middle East law, deals with constitutional developments in Syria from the end of World War I to the date of writing (ca. 1951) 11: Hourani presents a review of the political history of Syria and Lebanon from early historical times to 1945. The author is a social scientist with area specialization in the Middle East. 17: Syria, Directorate of Statistics, as noted previously, contains some limited general data on ethnography, as well as statistical information on Syria up to 1953. Of the eleven sources in the file one is rated as "3" (good, useful source but not uniformly excellent), this being 2: Belgrave; four are rated as "4" (excellent secondary data), these being 4: Cummins and Shanklin, 6: Government of Syria, 11: Hourani, and 15: Khadduri; six are evaluated as "5" (excellent primary data), these being 5: Barakat, 7: Lewis, 9: Hitti, 14: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development Report, 16: Collart, and 17: Syria, Directorate of Statistics. All sources were processed in 1955-1956.]